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pork. By the time this is ready, the men are in from the fields impatient for their dinner.

In the meantime the men have been engaged upon work of their own. The farmer rises when he hears his wife busy herself in rekindling the turf on the hearth. If there are sons, he wakes them. After that he goes to the cow barns in the haggard to inspect the cattle housed there overnight and tend to their wants in water and hay. After breakfast, if the day is fine, neither too bitterly cold nor too soakingly wet, he sallies forth into the fields to whatever work the time of the year demands. If he finds himself confined to the house, he still has plenty to do in house and haggard.

If he and his sons go to the fields, he probably returns about eleven-thirty for the noon meal, the heavy meal of the day. Long habit calls forth his hunger and identifies it with the house. Several countrymen have remarked that they never feel hungry away from the house but are ready to eat when they get inside. The dinner unites most of the family for the first time during the day since breakfast. Only the small children of school age are absent. Their share of the meal is often saved for them until they return about four o'clock.

As at breakfast, the men sit down together immediately, falling to the steaming plates of cabbage, bacon, and potatoes the woman sets before them. As they eat, she stands ready to refill their plates, talking with them about the morning's work and the news of the neighborhood. It is the chief time of family conversation. During the meal the woman has boiled tea and, when the men finish with their plates, she clears away and lays bread and tea before them. Sometimes there is a longer interval between tea and dinner, devoted to smoking and talk.

As before, the women and children do not eat until the men have finished. They take their places together when the men have left or have moved off to smoke an after-dinner pipe, an indispensable part of the meal for them.

dinner pipe, an indispensable part of the meal for them. The children may sometimes not come to the table but eat sitting upon the settle or the hearth seats. They are very silent children. They take little part in the family discussion between older members unless questioned directly.

After dinner the men return to their work. The women begin their household and farmyard tasks anew. The fowl have grown so hungry, meanwhile, that they are invading the kitchen and the woman must "hunt" them out of the house. From what remains of the pot of potatoes (which may often hold as much as forty pounds) she feeds them and feeds, too, the household pets. They eat what the family eats, though meat comes their way only upon special occasions.

This done, the woman's chores for the afternoon are much the same as those of the morning. Another large pot of potatoes, mangels, and turnips must be prepared for the pigs, more milk and grain mixed and fed to the calves, turf brought in for the fire, water fetched from the well, and rooms cleaned and swept, in an endless cycle of activity. Should the routine duties come to a pause, there is still always plenty to do in washing, mending, and knitting the clothes of the household. The woman's hands are never idle.

There is another important daily activity within the house. The great staple, bread, is baked daily into round cakes or loaves upon the "griddle," an iron tripod, on the hearth. The woman may bake at any time during the day and, if necessary, more than once. Even late in the evening, when the whole family is gathered round the fire, her last task may be to bake bread for late evening tea.

After four in the "evening" (as the countryman divides the day), the children arrive from school and must be fed. The woman sits down with them, talking over the happenings of the day, for children are important purveyors of news.

labors, for all the tasks not strictly connected with the household fall in their province. We shall have occasion later to examine fully the sexual dichotomy of labor such a division of tasks represents. 512 221 462

For the countryman the Christmas season, from the beginning of Advent to Epiphany or "Little Christmas" (January 6), is the dead of winter. It is a period in which all farm work is at a standstill. The farmer has completed the last of his harvest and brought in the last of his potatoes from the field. The cattle are securely housed against the winter cold. The farmer feels himself free to sit round the house during the cold wet days and devote his season to holiday. The working day is at its shortest. Outside, the weather is usually unsettled, a cold rain falling on the sodden fields. It is for him as though the course of the year had stopped and were waiting, gathering its forces for the new year. 132 527 221

It is a period of great social activity in the local community. The very important religious ceremonies of the season call forth an intensified activity in the parish. There are constant visits back and forth; each house is ready to offer its hospitality to its neighbors; and the community gives itself over to dances, cards, talk, and calls. Not until the religious season closes with Epiphany does the countryman feel that the year begins anew. 221 527 574 621

With the beginning of the year, the cold uncertain weather with its succession of bitter wet days, leaving the fields too wet to work, does not end, but the Christmas season has marked the transition. The farmer must now make his plans for the spring planting, lay in his seed, repair machinery, and make ready for the season about to begin. On drier days he can busy himself in the field in cleaning ditches and drainages. In the evenings much of the conversation on visits and at home revolves round the coming planting, and both new and traditional experience with 221 132 241 221 521

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types, varieties, growth cycles, yields, and care of seeds and cattle passes round by word of mouth.

The first of February, St. Brigid's Day, marks the beginning of spring. For the countryman the return of the "hard" days of wind and clear weather herald the season of the land's drying off. Through February and March the gardens must be prepared, potatoes planted, and the fields made ready for the return of the cattle to them. Each hard day is a welcome opportunity, for only then can work in the fields go on. With favorable weather, the work of preparation is over in the beginning of March, and the actual planting begins. By St. Patrick's Day, with its promise of continuous hard weather, the gardens are ready for a second planting.

The potatoes demand the greatest attention. A fortnight after they are planted, they must be manured well with manure brought from the pile near the cattle cabins, and the ground must be leveled so that the plant will not go to stalk and thus fail to produce tubers. A fortnight more and the ground must be "softened" and the earth round the plant, which now shows its first leaves, must be "stirred." By the time May is reached, the potatoes must be "landed." Earth must be taken from between the long ridges in which the potatoes are planted and heaped up over them from each side. Thereafter nothing remains until the harvest but a summer spraying against blight.

Throughout the spring the cattle have demanded attention. March and April see the birth of calves and the beginning of the milk season and intensified butter-making. The great spring cattle fairs take place. The farmer must devote himself to the all-important business of buying and selling his milch and store cattle and his calves. At home the cattle demand constant care against hunger, disease, and cold as he mixes their diet of fast diminishing hay with the slowly returning pasture grass.

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574 602 "put down before" the countryman who is traveling to town or to the fair or who is merely making the evening *cuaird*, or visit, at which the older men of the local community gather round the hearth to chat and retell the old stories of legend and folklore and discuss the news. Niggardly treatment in this regard leads to disputes, as does abuse of the privilege by the visitor. A standing joke in Luogh was the treatment given to her too-voracious relatives there by a woman who exercised considerable ingenuity in starving them out without offending them.

574 602 273 Similarly, the obligations extend to such occasions of good fellowship and holiday as the fair day and market. "Friends" treat one another at the local public houses on meeting in town. Thus one countryman complained to the authors that he dreaded the fair day, for he must drink up all his profits with his "friends." Others are able to strike a happier balance; and a religious pledge of teetotalism likewise surmounts the difficulty.

241 594 182 The sum of the evidence presents the small farm economy as a family situation in which economic effort, individual and coöperative, is controlled by the social forces operative within the family. Labor connected with agriculture is merely one feature of a total constellation of behavior, enforced through obligations reciprocal in nature and maintained by sentiments and sanctions in a traditional setting.

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592 606 578 It might get so bad that the old woman would get up and leave and go live with her daughter. She would do this if the mother of her daughter's husband were dead, even though the father might still be living in the house. But squabbles are bad things and, if the new woman would ask the old persons their opinion and how to do this and that, there would never be any trouble and the new wife could go ahead and do just as she pleased and the old people would think that she was doing it the way that she said. The daughter-in-law, if she did what she ought, would do this and treat the old folks nice.

[521 522] The theme of strife between mother and daughter-in-law is one dear to the hearts of the countrymen. It appears very frequently in conversation and in jokes. If the family is to continue its existence, the introduction of the new woman must be effected smoothly. The whole moral force of the community as well as the interest of family harmony bear upon the two women. The fear of gossip in the neighborhood operates strongly to keep the young woman with her husband, and every family makes a strong attempt to hide its personal troubles as much as possible from the general knowledge of the community.

Nevertheless, stranger as the new woman may be, the norms of the community in ordinary cases demand that the young husband take the part of his wife. The bond between them is stronger than that between son and parent. As the quotation above shows, it is usually the mother who must leave. The country people deplore such an event, but they know that the son "has right" in so doing. Many statements of this attitude are to be heard among the small farmers and any examinations of cases of dispute which end in rupture show the attitude to be enforced in reality.

That this should be the case reflects the function of the marriage and matchmaking of the farm family. It provides for continuance.

592 888 The new position of the old couple and their desires in the altered situation which has seen their displacement ex-

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They occupy this place and receive this respect from other persons than their relatives. This respect is as much folk custom as the norms of family life. The community can on occasion enforce it upon the family members through gossip, verbal censure, and, more rarely, direct intervention in the person of the priest. 888 626

The vocabulary of the countryman and a great many of the judgments and comments he makes upon his surroundings express the valuations of the community upon age. In the discussion of the house interior it was remarked that the conducts of the different age groups were too "natural" to the farmers to evoke verbal recognition among them. The statement is true only in a sense. The farmers make no explicit recognition of the organization of behavior upon the basis of age. But they are never silent upon the implications of such organization as it affects individual conduct in daily life. 888 561

More cogent, perhaps, for our understanding are the many expressions which arise from day to day based upon the speaker's place within an age grade. A great part of the constant talk which flows back and forth among the friends and neighbors who pass their lives within a rural community takes its form so. Particularly is this true of discussion of the past, a favorite topic and one which came very frequently indeed to the authors' ears. Gossip and personalities are as frequent a theme, and a speaker rarely fails to qualify the object of his remarks with an appropriate definition of his relative age. Even to intimates a man is referred to as "old John" or "young Michael." 888 561 521

Perhaps it is the discussion of the past which illustrates best partiality for the things of one's own age. The older men and women describe the "old days" with enthusiasm and regret. The "old times" are a ready topic among the country people, or rather among the older ones. Many an evening an old person can be got to tell of the "old times." 888 521

[1 [i.e., the aged. – Analyst]

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He or she takes little warming to the task. They were hard times, even "bad times" of famine and death, but the speakers throw a glow of courage and glamour round them. Even the mention of the lack of tools, draft animals, shoes, and many other amenities of present existence evokes comments such as "Weren't they the poor old times?" and "Wasn't it hard the work they had to do in the old days?" Phrases of murmured commiseration and headshaking regret or pity are not without a tinge of pride for listener and teller alike. Remembered necessities in the eyes of the old people who tell the tale are now feats of endurance and strength to which the new generation could never aspire. That is the point for those who tell and those who listen. Where could you get a young man today to walk from Corrofin to Ballinasloe in his bare feet forty miles and back over the stony roads? Where is the woman today who could shoulder a creel turf and carry it a hundred yards out through the bog mud to the famine road before the Board put in the road to the bog above Dunnagore?

Even the meager diet of the old times is remembered with a certain nostalgic pride. An old man, called upon one winter evening, began his remarks upon the theme characteristically:

> In the old days people used to have a maize gruel "stirabout" for breakfast, but you couldn't get any of the young people to eat it now. There was a potato bread, *stampaí*, and it was very good too. The people in the old times had great teeth and, when they died, they would have every one left in their heads. Their teeth would be stronger than a horse's. When the people ate potatoes and bread three times a day, they were healthier and lived to a ripe old age. Now with all the better food, they are not as well.

Such a belief rises very frequently to the lips of the old people who remember the days of the past either in their own or their parents' experience. The implication is clear. The young people, the new generation, are not so strong

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nor so hardy nor even so good-natured as those who went before. 888

Discussions of the present fall into the same vein. Just as, for the older members of the community, the past reflects their glories and is a convenient vehicle for the expression of their superiority, so the present can be measured against the past in the same terms, usually only to be found lacking. 521

Often the expressions take a different turn. They become that universal complaint, the younger generation.

> Young people today are not what they used to be [said one old farmer in the course of a general discussion of the golden age that was his youth]. They spend money for fags, they have to be gambling every night, or else go to a dance, and, if they happen to win a turkey, they will nearly shake the house down when they come in. There is no good in the country when things go on like this. In the old days a man used always to be out repairing his stone walls, cleaning his land, or doing something. They expect everything to be done for them.

He paused for an illustration, selected one from among his own cronies, and swept volubly on:

> Wasn't Keane out every night with his cattle putting them in small fields and late in the night? He would have his supper waiting for him when he came in, but he would take off his shoes so not to waken his father, and then to bed. Wasn't he up early in the morning and out working? They cleared a nice piece of land in the common. He kept it all until he had cattle up by Ballywaughan. You wouldn't get any of the young people to do that now. There's no control of them.

But even among his listeners, all of them "old" like himself, the young people had some defense:

> But there has to be some fun for the young people. If they don't enjoy themselves, there is no heart in them. You can't expect them to be always at home.

But these statements express more than a mere rivalry between young and old. They spring from a feeling of

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mutuality between young and old which transcends rivalry. The old days were better, among other reasons, because the dependence of the young upon the old was greater. The present is less attractive because the young no longer help the old as they should. Both facets of such mutuality may be expressed, even though the speaker, if he is old, casts it in the form of mistrust and dislike for the young. The whole of experience can be brought within this scheme of attitudes. To give an example, let an old fellow, an opponent of the present regime of Gaelicization in Ireland, recite his misgivings about the school system:

> I am patriotic and it may be a bad thing to say but I think the school system they have now is bad and the teaching of Irish is bad. In my day and before, a man might go to school when he could – maybe for only three months out of the twelve – but he would know more than they get now when they go to school all the time. The old people learned more then. When the child finished school, he could be expected to read a newspaper to the old people and to write a letter for them, or to do sums – and he would do it well.

His complaint is much longer, but enough has been given to show his mistrust of a schooling which to his mind makes no provision for the mutuality mentioned. This mutuality was and is strongest in the realm of farm work. The farm family demands the coöperation of all its members. No less, the community makes its valuation of young and old upon that coöperation. General discussions among the country people bring out this fact again and again. To illustrate again, two "old fellows," adult farmers with families, could agree upon a formula running somewhat as follows:

> The men were stronger in the past, they worked harder, while you try to get any young person to do as much work as the old men now and they would laugh at you. The young people today seem to see how little they can do rather than how much, while

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the old men would strip down and compete with one another to see who can do the most work. 888 521

Yet they were later forced to admit:

The people in the old times were not as knacky as they are now. Isn't it true that they used to have the horse in a stall feeding him while the man would be out with a spade turning over the garden?

Most of these allusions are to the realm of farm work. Just as the rivalry between father and son in the farm family is most intimate and most constant in the economy which they pursue together, so the expression of the conflict between the generations in the community at large takes the same form and finds its expression within the frame of the work that the community must do to live. 888 578 561

Naturally enough, the young people do not express these attitudes. They do not agree with their elders on the score of their own shortcomings. But they have a good deal to say, among themselves, from their own point of vantage. They express the reverse of the medal. The past is not so golden to them, and there are many among their elders whose idiosyncrasies can be sweepingly condemned with some such criticism as "old fool" and "old blatherer." Like the son already quoted who gave his father his head in farm work and listened patiently for orders only to follow his own devices, they have their own valuations of themselves in which youth and strength outweigh age and wisdom.

But within a system of values in which the old represent the nexus of kinship and bear honor within the community, the young people do not see the issue so clearly. There is as much respect as there is antagonism in their verbal assessment of the older men and women. The young people recognize themselves as forming a distinct group with interests and sentiments of its own, opposed in the scheme of rural life to the elders. They use the word "we" and oppose it to "them" for the old. They recognize places, pursuits, 578 561

country "stations"[8] the elder men and women file in for confession and come forward for Communion first. On the road to the shop, to church, or to the fair, the young man must keep pace and the elder may call him to his side.

The relation shows itself best perhaps in the constant discussions that are the breath of life for the countryman. No work is too pressing to prevent the countryman from "stopping on the road to pass the time of day." In the rural community such personal communion is an indispensable bridge across the social and physical space separating farm from farm. In all such discussion it is the elder men who may regulate length and subject of conversation. When groups form in pubs, in one another's houses on evening visits, before and after mass in the churchyard, the enthralling game of presenting argument, choosing sides, directing the flow of talk, belongs to the older men. The young men must listen in. At such times the important news of the countryside disseminates itself. Political judgments are formed, and the ephemeral decisions of daily life are made. In all this the boys are silent listeners. It is a bold young man who enters an opinion of his own.

Second, there is the matter of the contacts of the community with the outside world. The elder men, these same father-owners, represent the interests of the community before priest, schoolmaster, merchant, cattleman, and government official. The younger men hang back, ready to be brought in when the elders want them, listening in and keeping their own counsel. Much of this we have already indicated, but it is necessary to cite it here again in order to round out the picture.

The relation extends to very small matters indeed. The better cup of tea, the bigger piece of bread, the glass of

[8] In country districts remote from the parish church masses are said in the private houses of parishioners once or twice a year in order to allow the performance of Easter or Christmas duty by those confined to their homes through age or sickness or other cause. These are "country stations," important religious events in every townland.

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621 487 paths crisscrosses the fields in all directions from house to house and across the countryside beyond.

887 573 Old man O'Donoghue's house, the third in the village, is the "old men's house." Mrs. Ruin, a neighbor, will tell you what the old man means to the men of the village:

> The old man is getting weaker and when he is gone out of it the village won't be the same. He will be the greatest loss. It is round his fireplace the men gather. Where will they go when he dies?

But the question has not yet arisen for the men who meet there nearly every night, particularly in winter, when the evening is long and the work day its shortest. Soon after the evening meal they begin to gather. Occasionally this or that habitué may not come, but it is always the same group of men who stride across the threshold with a "God bless all here," and take their accustomed places.

889 542 O'Donoghue has the place of honor in the chair to the right of the fire. He is an old man now and no longer active beyond the house door. He lives here with his nephew, a man of fifty, and his nephew's wife. The couple have no children and must depend upon their own efforts in the working of the farm. It is a good farm and the nephew works it well, deferring to the old man in occasional matters.

888 573 521 O'Donoghue is the "judge" in this gathering. In the nightly discussions which take place around his fireplace, he has a judicial role. He is regarded as a wise man to whose opinions all must defer. Usually they know he contents himself with a word of affirmation, or now and again a slow and measured judgment upon a current topic. He initiates nothing and only occasionally adds a non-judicial bit to the conversation. Then he shows himself to have a fund of funny and apt anecdotes as good as any other man's. He rarely generalizes. When he does, his remarks deal with the "old times."

Silent as this shrewd old man is, his is the central position

888 573 521 in the group. Comments and questions are phrased through him. He takes the preferred verbal bit and passes it on among the others. And when agreement is finally reached, it is his quiet "So it is" that settles the point for good.

573 O'Halloran sits on the hob across the hearth from him. He is the "drawer-down" in the scheme of jocular titles which includes most of the group. O'Halloran is a man of fifty but mature. He owns a farm a little better perhaps [542] than most, just beyond the village. He works it with his wife and six children, the eldest of whom is nearing twenty. As he has no parents left alive, he is the "old man" and the man of the house. But individually he is more. "He has a [484 great head on him," they say. He has had a somewhat wider experience, once having traveled as a salesman over the 446] roads of southern Ireland. Yet, in spite of the fact that he is occasionally a little skeptical and his politics are somewhat suspect to the villagers, who are today De Valera men to a man, he is emphatically one of them.

573 521 His title of "drawer-down" is an apt one. O'Halloran seeks information. He most frequently of them all brings up points of interest and questions of the day. These he addresses to O'Donoghue, who passes them on for general discussion. Like all the rest of them his illustrations are apt and his anecdotes definite and precise, but his chief role is to "draw the talk down" to common levels of interest which allow all to take part.

573 521 589 O'Loughlin usually occupies the other hob. He has no real place here. He is a bachelor, aged fifty or so, and, though he comes here, he has little to say. He is seemingly silent all the time, and he breaks his silence only to add to unanimity. For O'Loughlin is very poor and lives alone. Having no family, he can neither coor nor work his land to best advantage. And occasionally he works on the road, breaking stones with the boys of the village. Just as he has no voice here, he has no title either.

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Roche, "the public prosecutor," sits by the fire, opposite the old man O'Donoghue. He is a man of sixty or so, with a wife of the same age and an unmarried son and daughter, both in their thirties, still at home. His is a good farm and he is still active upon it. He, too, has a reputation for shrewdness, but his role here is a different one. Roche demands "why?" He makes one bring out one's best arguments, and pursues a point to its final conclusion. There his interest stops and he makes way for O'Donoghue, who sums up the agreement of the group. Roche earns his title well. He tests out the other's mettle. No one is offended at his "prosecution," for it clears the issue and brings out the right and the wrong upon which all can agree and O'Donoghue phrase judgment.

Behind them, a little further into the middle of the room away from the hearth, sits Cullinan, the "senator." Cullinan lives across the lake, where he works a middling farm with a wife and five children. Several of the sons are nearing twenty-five and Cullinan himself is well past fifty.

The "senator" is a weighty man. His part in the *cuaird* is in character. Cullinan is the one of them most fertile in cogent and fitting anecdotal illustrations. In a scheme of references, such as this, to past events and traditional precedents, Cullinan's many memories of persons and happenings, slowly and accurately phrased, give weight to the evening discussions.

Still further behind them, and often perched upon settle or table in the kitchen, are two other habitués. The elder of them is Noonan, a man of sixty, who lives in the village with a wife a little younger than himself and two boys and a girl, out of a once numerous progeny, still at home. The children are in their twenties and help him in his still active conduct of the farm.

Privately at least, the others think Noonan a bit of a fool. He is as good a farmer as any of them, it is true, and knows

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573 how to drive a shrewd bargain. But his role at *cuaird* is not
521 a weighty one. Noonan is a very voluble man. He can be counted upon at all times to enliven the gathering with many opinions on all subjects. His volubility makes him more vulnerable than the rest to the public prosecutor's relentless logic, but it helps too to keep the conversation alive and active. Consequently, though he has no important title, he is a member of long standing.

573 The younger of the two sitting in back is John Quin. His
592 position is a little anomalous, though he is a Rynamona man by birth and blood. Quin lives on a good farm just outside the village. He married-in there, taking over the
[582] place of a dead husband. But, true to the country custom, it was not the widow he married. She brought in a sister, who, in turn, married Quin. But both women are still living in the house. The elder sister has become the "old woman" and is treated more like a parent than a contemporary. It is Quin and his wife, the younger sister, who work the farm and who regard it as their own. Their claim is a perfect one, were it not for one misfortune: they are childless at fifty.

573 Quin is thus neither fully a young man nor fully an old
561 one, as the countryside reckons age status. His place in the evening gathering reflects this intermediate state. In the two years in which the authors had the old men's house at Rynamona under observation, Quin was going through a transition. It was one which he could not describe himself, but which showed itself well in his behavior.

573 When we first came, Quin divided his evenings between
561 the old men's house and card playing in several of the young
521 men's gathering places. At one of these, to be described shortly, he was an important figure. His pronouncements were listened to with respect. He had "weight," and he conducted himself importantly and showed a serious demeanor and a little disdain for frivolous pursuits. In the

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old men's house he looked a different person. He was often 573
silent or contented himself with answering questions. 561
When he did speak, it was to "act the playboy," in the 521
country phrase. It seemed to be a periodic fluctuation with
him. One evening he would be silent and the next he would
be more than ready to joke, to render a song, to dance, and
to break into playful banter. Sometimes his lively efforts
were successful. Sometimes they were not. But the playboy
role did not last long. A year later he was a constant visitor,
and he had given up all other visits. He had moved in.
O'Donoghue, the "judge," passed judgment one evening
which affirmed his new place. "He's a bit of a playboy," he
said, "but there's a good head on him."

These seven men make up the old men's *cuaird*. As the 573
evidence of their behavior shows, they are a closely knit 887
clique with a code of conduct and valuation of their own,
one strong enough to enforce a specific personality on each
of the members in accord with his role in the group.

To appraise the *raison d'être* of such a group in Rynamona, we must examine it in relation to the rest of the community. These seven are not the only old men in the community. Roche, the prosecutor, had an elder brother with a good farm across the lake on the line between Rynamona and the next townland, Carhunamadra. But the elder Roche is seventy-five and no longer stirs out the door. He is too feeble to come to the *cuaird* house, and his faculties are failing. His sons, still young men, work the farm.

But there is another as well, a more active old man. Moroney is perhaps the strongest farmer in Rynamona. His house in the village is the best also, and he has the best-stocked farm. Moroney and his wife, at sixty, have a son [592]
and daughter nearing thirty still at home. The four work energetically and the household is prosperous. Each year Moroney stands for them in the "station," and the family's

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loneliness at home. Two new cliques of slightly younger "old men" were competing for central position in the community.

But despite such variation from community to community, the old men's *cuairds* act very similarly. The topics brought up and debated upon are much the same from year to year and place to place. First in importance, however, are those concerning agriculture. Times of sowing, reaping, harvesting are debated; the merits of various seeds are disputed; shop and fair prices are compared; and the community's trade often affected thus. The "old men" are conservative farmers, as are most peasants, and an innovation must be thoroughly tested before it wins, here in the evening *cuaird*, the approval of the community. Traditional methods of farming receive their strongest support here in the web of legend, proverb, and reference to the past that the speakers weave around them.

Much of the community's relation to the outer world is debated here and determined by the old men's agreement. In late years, this has come to be called "politics." It is here that petitions for roads, for relief work in winter, for extension of agricultural prize schemes, and all the "political" business of the county council and its committees originates on the side of the local community. It is here too that the community reaches its unanimity in party voting. In Rynamona, for example, it was felt that it was in the interest of all that there should be no dissension on the score of politics. The old men's *cuaird* debated the matter and agreed upon support of Fianna Fail, the De Valera party, an allegiance it held for the years 1927 to the time of the authors' visits. Even O'Halloran, whose private views leaned in another direction, begged the authors that no word of his political heterodoxy be allowed to reach the ears of his neighbors. "I wouldn't want them to think I wasn't with them," he said.

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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Here it is too that the community makes its appraisal of its own members and those with whom it is in contact. And that appraisal tells quite heavily in the behavior the community will adopt toward the person or condition appraised. Even the priest finds each of his acts and even his sermons discussed and debated in the evening *cuaird*, and he "gets a name" according to the decision reached. In Rynamona an incident occurred which shows the type of slow appraisal the community makes and the speed with which, once its judgment is formed, it puts its decision into action. Not far away in the same general region, a gentlewoman moved back after years of absence to a small manor house which the family had had for many years. She was unknown to the farmers and, despite her friendly interest in them, seemed to be unable to establish contact with them. This distressed her, the more that her kindness seemed ineffectual in putting an end to the inevitable petty pilfering which she knew she must expect. One day, about a year later, her horse bolted on the country road. An expert horsewoman, she soon brought him into control. Thereafter her luck with the country people changed. Her exploit had made the rounds of the local community and had won approval for her. The old men agreed she was a grand lady and had a great hand with horses. And the petty pilfering sank to manageable proportions.

The community regulates its internal affairs through the *cuaird* as well. It is here public opinion is formulated. There is nothing formal about the decisions made upon the incidents arising from day to day. The local community has no implement with which to enforce its will. But it has the power of gossip and in action the power which in the critical days of the land agitation won itself an international name: the boycott.

In a later section the sanctions the local community exercises will be discussed. It is sufficient here to point out

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audience. The point of importance here is that it is among the old people that folk myth and folk belief are preserved and expressed for the community.

If we are to examine in full rural behavior based upon age and its connection with the old adult clique whose function in the community we are assessing, we must offer some contrast with the behavior of other age groups.

We have already mentioned that the old men's house in Rynamona was not the only seat of visiting after the day's work, and that the entertainment provided there was merely one instance of many gatherings taking place almost nightly, at least through the winter, in rural communities. In the statements given by older men about the meeting of the young men we have seen something of the manner in which other pursuits than those of the men's house are regarded.

Indeed in all the communities which came under the authors' notice the young men were as ardent evening visitors as were the older men. In Rynamona they were no less so.

There they gathered in most often at the house of Roche, the "prosecutor." They did this from long habit, as did their elders. But they had no larger justification for their doing so. They went because "you never feel the time passing when you're in with the boys." But there were marked differences in their meeting. There was no central clique so closely integrated as that in O'Donoghue's house. There were pairs of lads, brothers, friends, and groups of three and four and five who habitually played cards or walked the roads together.

A greater difference lay in their complete lack of concern with the affairs of the community. One could get them to talk only about their own plans or the trials of their own kind and age. There was no debate, no reaching of decisions, no appeal to tradition. The skills upon which those taking part in the meetings prided themselves and for which

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gives advantage to the buyer rather than to themselves, they would change nothing in it. Prowess in bargaining is recognized and valued in every person. A man who is a good hand at bargaining or a good intermediary between bargainers soon makes a name for himself. The man who can drive a hard bargain gets a hearty respect from his neighbors and wins a grudging respect even from his victims, but the man who lets himself be bested wins scant sympathy. At the same time, however, sharp or unfair practice soon wins condemnation.

All this lore the child learns as he does man's work. He is taken to fairs from the age of ten or so and stands on the fair green or in the streets the long hours from dawn until the last buyer leaves. He learns from actual experience and finds his lessons reviewed again and again in the constant discussion at home and on *cuaird* of prices, buyers, famous bargains and bargainers.

At home the approach of a fair leaves no doubt as to the importance of the event. Farmers talk of prospects for days ahead. Each man is asked what he intends to try to sell, and the merits and prospects of each beast are common coin. Every man hazards his opinion as to what prices will be, how they will compare with those of recent fairs in surrounding villages, and what beasts will find the readiest market. In the light of all this discussion the ordinary farmer makes up his mind either to try his luck or wait for a better chance.

Should he decide to try his luck in the coming fair, he has a well-established procedure to follow. He gathers his stock together, gives them any special attention they may need. If the fair is a long way off, he drives his bullocks and heifers halfway there the day before and puts them overnight in the field of a "friend" along the road. In this he has the aid of a boy or a "friend," after the pattern of kinship reciprocities.

On the day of the fair he is up as early as one or two in the

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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462 to butter is her charge. She is an expert at the
512 churn.

Her human charges fed, she must feed the animals in their turn. The full-grown cattle and the horse are not her charge, but she must tend calves and pigs and fowl. Milk and potatoes must be prepared for them all.

Before noon, she hangs a second kettle from the hook. This time she fills it with potatoes for the [262] family. In season, she will add white cabbage, and a portion or two of bacon or salt pork. By the time this is ready the men will be in from the fields impatient for their dinner.

For the men have not been idle. The farmer-father and husband wakes his sons, inspects the cattle and horse, if there is one, and gives them hay and water. If the day is fine, he sallies forth to the fields; if not, and the weather confines him to house and haggard, he has still plenty to do, in building walls, repairing and making machine parts, harness and tools.

Dinner unites the family for the first time since breakfast. Only children of school age are absent and their share of the meal is saved till later. As before, the women and children do not eat till the men have finished. But as the women serve, they [521] all talk about the experiences of the day. It is the chief time of general family conversation. Only the children are silent, for in rural Ireland a well-[858] behaved child is a silent one.

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beyond the haggard wall, as we have noted. All the many tasks of patching and repair are men's work, they fall to the farmer-father and his sons. The annual round is theirs, as the daily one belongs to the women.

For the countryman, the Christmas season, from the beginning of Advent to the Epiphany or 'Little Christmas', is the dead of winter. All farm work is at a standstill. The farmer is free to devote the season to holiday. Outside the weather is unsettled, a cold rain falling on the sodden fields. For him the year has stopped and is waiting to renew its forces.

With the Epiphany, the succession of bitter wet days does not end, but holiday does. One's mind turns to the earnest work of the year to come. The farmer plans his spring planting. On drier days he can clean ditches and drains; he can lay in seed and repair machines. In the evenings, conversation on visits and at home revolves round the coming planting and calving, and traditional experience goes from mouth to mouth. In fact, it is the time for all new plans, for it is Shrovetide, the season of match-making and marriage.

St. Bridget's Day, February 1, marks the beginning of spring. For St. Bridget promised every second day thereafter would be 'hard'. The return of the 'hard' days of wind and clear weather herald the land's drying-off. Through February and March, gardens must be prepared, potatoes planted,

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476 co-operating groups are smaller; tools are more modern and better distributed; resources are fuller.

246 476 Lending a 'boy' is the commonest form of co-operation. It goes on constantly, but can best be described in a scene of great activity, such as hay-making. I met it first there, in Luogh, the townland in which we found the 'west room'. The hay was early in Luogh in 1933. Harvest began in mid-July. The weather was just right. Warm dry days had brought the grasses to maturity, and gave promise of continuing. The families of Luogh set to work to 'save the hay': mowing it, letting it dry as it lay, and then stacking it, first into small grass cocks, then into the usual six- to eight-foot hay-cocks. Later, after several weeks, it would be moved into a single great hayrick in the haggard. Now it was a question of mowing, drying and stacking it before rains caught the farmers in mid-course.

[521] There was much interest in every family's progress. The weather and the yields of the meadows drove all other subjects out of conversation. The men felt spurred to work well and quickly; there was a general rivalry in the air. The women were as eager, and brought their children to the meadow's edge, while they worked with their rakes behind the mowers.

About half the families had horse-drawn mowing machines. Those who had them mowed their own meadows, working from earliest morning as long as

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custom of the community as it is the habit of family life. Where necessary, the community can enforce its maintenance. The community can, as it were, invade the family and regulate its members through gossip, verbal censure, and more rarely, direct intervention in the person of the priest.

The countryman's vocabulary is full of allusions to values upon age. A great deal of the judgments and the comments he makes upon his surroundings express them. Naturally, they do not discuss the organization of behaviour upon age in explicit terms; for such conducts are 'natural' and unchangeable in the minds of those who are shaped by them. But they are never silent upon the implications of such organization as it affects individual conduct in daily life. The upstart 'boy', the 'bold' child, the 'old man who ought to have shame for acting like that' are as constant objects of reproof and censure as the 'bad' father or son.

In general statements, one hears many expressions, day after day, which arise from the speaker's place within an age group. The broad opposition between 'old' and 'young' colours rural thinking powerfully. A great deal of the constant talk which flows back and forth among the 'friends' and neighbours who pass their lives within the rural community takes its form within this social context.

This is particularly true of discussion of the past. The past is a favourite topic; the 'old days' something of an obsession in the countryside. This

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● 521 888 561 is not only because one of the listeners was the anthropologist 'looking for old custom'. For, where descent is a critical nexus of habitual relationship and old age the most honoured state, the past cannot fail to be the focus of interest.

Thus the older men and women are very partial to the things of their own age. And the young people are, in part, swept along with them. The 'old times' are a very ready topic among the country-people. Many a time an old person will be got to tell of them; he or she takes little warming to the task. They were the hard times, even bad times, of famine and death but the speakers throw a glow of courage and glamour round them. There were few tools, no draft-animals, no shoes, none of the amenities of present existence. The listeners murmur phrases of commiseration and shake their heads in pity. "Weren't they the bad old times?" and "Wasn't it hard the work they had to do in the old days?" they ask one another. But there is a tinge of pride in their voices, in the manner of tellers and listeners alike.

For remembered necessities, in the eyes of the old people who tell the tale, are now feats of endurance to which the new generation could never aspire. That is the point for those who tell and those who listen. Where could you get a young [481] man today to walk from Corofin to Ballinasloe, walk in his bare feet the forty miles and back over the stony roads? Where is the woman today who

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Where is the woman today who
could shoulder a creel of turf a hundred yards out through the bog mud to the famine road, before the Board put in the road to the bog above Dunnagore?

Often the expressions take a different turn. They become that universal complaint — the younger generation. "Young people aren't what they used to be," said one old farmer in the course of a general discussion of the golden age that was his youth. "They spend money for fags, they have to be gambling every night, or else to a dance, and if they happen to win a turkey they will nearly shake the house down [in their triumph]. There is no good in the country when things go on like this. In the old days a man used always be out repairing his stone walls, cleaning his land, or doing something. Now you can't get them to do anything unless you pay them."

Here he paused for an illustration, chose one from among his own cronies, and swept volubly on. "Wasn't old Keane out every night with his cattle, and he putting them in small fields and late in the night? Wasn't he up early in the morning and out working? They cleared a nice piece of land in the common. He kept at it till he had cattle all the way up by Ballyvaughan. You wouldn't get any of the young people to do that now. There's no controlling them."

Discussions of the present fall into the same vein. The past, for the older members of the community,

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reflects their glories and serves as a convenient vehicle for the expression of their superiority. In the same spirit, the present can be measured against the past, usually only to be found lacking.

But these statements express much more than a mere rivalry between old and young. They spring from a mutuality between them which transcends rivalry. The old days are better among other things, because the interdependence of young and old was greater. The present is less attractive because the old no longer control the young, and the young no longer aid the old, as they should. Both facts of this interrelation may be expressed, even though the speaker, if he be old, may cast them in terms of mistrust and dislike for the young. In fact, the whole of experience may be brought within this scheme of attitudes. To give an example, here is one old fellow's rationalization of his misgivings about the present Irish school system:

"I am patriotic and it may be a bad thing to say but I think the school system they have now is bad and the teaching of Irish is bad. In my day and before, a man might go to school when he could—maybe for only three months in the year. But he would know more than they get now when they go to school all the time. The old people learned more then. When a child finished school he would be expected to read a newspaper to the old people, and to write a letter for them, or to do sums. And he would do it well." His complaint is much longer

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but you have heard enough to see his mistrust of a system which to his mind makes no provision for the mutuality between young and old.

This mutuality was and is strongest in the realm of farm work. The farm family demands the co-operation of all its members. No less the community makes its valuation of young and old upon that co-operation. General discussions among the country-people bring out this fact again and again. To illustrate by quotation once more: two old fellows, adult farmers with families, could reach agreement upon a formula running somewhat as follows:

"The men were stronger in the past, they worked harder, while you try to get any young person to do as much work as the old men now and they would laugh at you. The young people today seem to see how little work they can do rather than how much. While the old men would strip down and compete with one another to see who can do the most work."

So they went on, but even in the midst of their theme they were forced to admit that there were compensations: "It is true for you that the people in the old times weren't as knacky as they are now. Wasn't it how they used to have the horse in a stall feeding, while they [themselves] would be out with a spade turning over the garden [and no plough]."

Most of these allusions are to the realm of farm

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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521 work. Just as the rivalry between father and son is
888 most intimate and most constant in the economy
561 which they pursue together, so the expression of the conflict between the generations in the community takes the same form.

You will probably ask if there are not grains of truth in the older generation's statements. My answer is that I neither know nor care. And I feel the countryman is not much more concerned. For this is a very old rivalry and once its expression was even more formalized than it is today. We owe the first poem of the eighteenth-century poet O'Rahilly to the expression of this rivalry, in an older day when Gaelic poetry still survived. He was called in to defend the young unmarried men, the 'boys' of today, in a poetic contest over respective merits between them and the 'old men', that is, the married men of family and substance. And he played, too, in the hurley game which fought out the contest in another field. For we are dealing here not so much with truths or falsities as with group-attitudes reciprocally held. Pareto would call them derivations; he would find their residues in the sentiments of those grouped together about a common status in the community. Once these sentiments were expressed ceremonially as in O'Rahilly's day. Even now the men of Luogh point out a large stone. With that stone the 'men' and the 'boys' competed at tests of strength till just a few years ago.

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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For the young people do not agree with their elders on the score of their own shortcomings. They do not express these attitudes. They have a good deal to say, on the other hand, among themselves from their own point of vantage. They express the reverse of the medal. The past is not so golden to them; and there are many among their elders whose idiosyncrasies can be swept aside with some such sweeping condemnation as 'old fool' and 'old blatherer'. Like the son I quoted in the last lecture, who listened patiently to his father, only to follow his own devices, they have their own valuations in which youth and strength outweigh age and ripe experience.

Yet within a system of values in which the old represent the nexus of kinship and bear honour within the community, the young people do not see the issue so clearly. There is as much respect as there is antagonism in their verbal assessment of the old people. In the non-verbal behaviour of daily conduct, deference is uppermost. This fact sobers their group's egocentricity. In their position there is a necessary balance between subordination and compensatory vauntings and distastes. If you remember Synge's *Playboy*, you remember how reality broke in upon the playboy when the community saw his father still very much alive.

So, within this framework the young men can recognize themselves as a distinct group—an age grade, to use technical language. They have their

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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561 come forward only when called upon. At country 'stations' the elder men and women file in for confession and come forward for communion first. On the road to shop, church or fair, the young man must keep pace, and the elder may call him to his side.

521 561 The relation shows itself best perhaps in the constant discussions that are the breath of life for the countryman. No work is too pressing to prevent the countryman from 'stopping on the road to pass the time of day'. In the rural community such personal communion is an indispensable bridge across the social and physical space separating farm from farm. In all such discussion it is the elder men who may regulate length and subject of conversation. When groups form, in pubs, in one another's houses on evening visits, before and after mass in the churchyard, the enthralling game of presenting argument, choosing sides, directing the flow of talk, belongs to the older men. The young men must 'listen in'.

[208] At such times the important news of the countryside disseminates itself. Political judgments are formed, and the ephemeral decisions of daily life are made. In all this the 'boys' are silent listeners. It is a bold young man who enters an opinion of his own.

561 571 Then, secondly, there is the matter of the contacts of the community with the outside world. The elder men, these same father-owners, represent

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) · 1957
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and houses. There is a marked loosening of inhibitions at this time. The occasion is something of a festival, of picnic meals and keen appetites, so that tea is said to taste better at turf-cutting than at any other time. After the March winds and the lengthening days of spring have dried the bog surface there is a stirring in the homesteads, the well-worn tools are pulled out of their hiding-places and the smith is kept busy repairing spades and barrows. Bright new tools litter the town pavements on fair day, and the countryman chooses his new slane with an exhibition of caution that seems superfluous until one remembers that an ounce of weight or an inch of length can make the difference between smooth ease and back-break. April, everywhere the driest month of the year, is the best month for cutting: an early start gives the turves a better chance of drying, but the planting of crops keeps the men busy till the end of the month, so that May is the likeliest time to see them in the bogs. There is an old belief that to facilitate drying, peat should be cut when the moon is waning (Pl. 9, 1).

A whiff of turf smoke drifting from a hidden fire where the tea is brewed is the first sign that the bog is peopled. If it is a deep bog you will look in vain for signs of activity, but once you have been seen dozens of heads pop up from deep cuttings and the diggers welcome a break for a smoke and a 'crack'. Turbary rights are extremely complicated, but with the decreasing demand for turf there is little dissension even when banks are communally owned. Nowadays each family generally has its own bank or cutting-face, but it is customary for two or three families to pool their labour and work at each bank in turn. The owner of the bank by tradition provides food for the helpers. On the average a week's cutting provides sufficient fuel for each family, but the time taken and the amount required depend on the nature of the bog and on the quality of the turf. Ideally the season's cut should contain a proportion of brown top turf, that is light sphagnum peat for summer firing, and a proportion of black bottom peat for winter use: this is moist humified peat which dries hard as a brick and burns almost like coal. The amount required is measured by the load, that is the load of a small one-horse cart. I was told in Donegal that a good team of four men, cutting, lifting, wheeling and spreading,

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

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Figure 4. Low Village and Inis Thiar from the castle

ing has obscured in most places the disconformities between strata. Four rift 133
valleys indent the terraces, and the eastern one runs the entire length of the island 311
to the ocean and holds a 90-feet-deep fresh water lake (see Fig. 7). This valley [361]
and two of the other three to the west of it running half the length of the island
form two promontories on the upper terraces of which the other villages are
situated. Indenting only the lower terraces, the fourth rift is a minor one; it forms [172]
the valley in which the axe heads were discovered. Wells are found in each of the
rift valleys where shale strata are bared. The four villages, from west to east, are
Low, High, Castle, and Terrace.

Located in Low Village (see Fig. 4) are two grocery stores, known as 361
"shops," and an old coast guard station, and in High Village are the post office 34
and church; other buildings of importance are the new school on the common
land and the lighthouse at the back of the island. I already have described the
monuments of historical significance so need not consider them further. The older 366
of the two shops in Inis Beag is situated at the southwest margin of the common
land, while the other stands close to the rocky shore at the north end of the com-
munity. Simply a large, narrow room on the ground floor of the two-story dwelling 364
of its owner, each shop also serves as a public house, or "pub," where wines, spirits, 276
beer, stout, soft drinks, and tobacco are sold. Benches along wall and counter serve
the customers who linger, and purchases are made across the counter or in a small
enclosed room near the door, called the "snug." The usual occupants of the shop
are men who come to drink, smoke, visit with their neighbors, and sometimes
purchase goods for their families. Women and children when buying provisions [443]
usually enter the snug for privacy and confer with the shopkeeper through an
aperture opening on the counter. At night, the snug allows small groups of men to [521]
discuss matters of a private nature over drinks.

Coast guard personnel first were assigned to Inis Beag shortly after the 000

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

Climate

821 Whether or not the steamer calls at Inis Beag, especially during the winter months when severe storms are frequent, is of considerable psychological significance. The importance of weather conditions as they impinge, both directly and [182] indirectly, on this tiny island far out in the ocean cannot be overemphasized. Most [521] activities, and not only farming and fishing, are more or less affected by the climate, and the past, present, and future states of the weather figure prominently [676] in conversations among the folk. It is customary for individuals when meeting to talk first of the weather before turning to other matters, and some of the common greetings pertain to immediate conditions: "It is raining.", "It is windy.", or "It is a beautiful day." These are usually the phrases first mastered by non-Gaelic speakers who spend time in Inis Beag, along with the most used greeting—"God bless you." and its reply, "God and Mary bless you."

132 The year around climate of Inis Beag might be labeled cool, humid, rainy, [127] and windy, at least by one living in the Great Lakes region of the United States. A perusal of lighthouse records for the decade 1951 to 1960 revealed a mean temperature of 42 degrees (all figures Fahrenheit) for the winter months, December to March, and 59 degrees for the summer ones, June to September. During that decade, the lowest and highest temperatures recorded in Inis Beag, both during 1955, were 28 and 80 degrees respectively. January was the coldest month, with a mean temperature of 39 degrees, and July was the warmest, with 61 degrees. The island is located in a climatic zone in which the average rainfall is 40 to 50 inches per year; the average number of rain days per year is 225, and the average June sun hours per day is five and a half.

> Westerly winds predominate in Ireland, though naturally a climate experiencing the passage of so many depressions has winds from every quarter at some time during the year... Winds of gale force are most frequent in the northwest, where they average 40 per year... Most of the gales are from a westerly direction: they are so severe a menace to shipping that many inhabitants of [137] islands and remote coastal districts... profit from periodic salvage hauls... The absence of trees on the exposed western coasts of Ireland is usually regarded as a direct result of the exposure to westerly winds... (Freeman 1960:50-51).

Snow usually falls several times during the winter, but it melts within hours as the temperature seldom fails to climb above freezing on any day. During the months from June to August, the sea and air are often warm enough to encourage 821 "comfortable" swimming by tourists, usually off the strand. The islanders consider May the ideal month so far as climate is concerned, for the weather tends to be cool, dry, and windy; flowers grow in profusion and birds return in great numbers. March weather, which is much colder but also dry and windy, is called "hard."

All of the adults of Inis Beag are amateur weather forecasters; however, [86] several old men are considered to be specialists in the art. Some households possess [207] barometers, and forecasts on the radio are listened to attentively by those who own sets. But, in the main, the folk prefer to make their own prognostications based on traditional signs, most of which are sound meteorologically and the outgrowth of

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

561 461 178 561 [521] [562] complain about how difficult their new work regime is when compared to the old. Young men are chided by their elders, as well as by their wives, about how much less they labor today than did their forerunners and womenfolk. One of the most popular conversational themes among old men is the contrast between generations—how much stronger and more industrious those of the "hero breed" (a term favored by Mullen [1936] in describing Irish islanders of the past) living half a century ago were than men are nowadays. Women are provoked by how vociferously their spouses complain of the difficulty and endlessness of their labor, and yet how little initiative and industry they exhibit and how often they are idle. "Light work" or no work at all is customary on days when the steamer calls, when it rains heavily, on the day an islander dies and two days afterward, on Sundays and holydays of obligation, and at other times, contrary to the state of affairs which prevailed in the past.

461 Several men admitted to me their guilt about not working more often and energetically, and told me that many of their fellows "talk big" but do not match their words with deeds. All of them questioned the need for maintaining traditional patterns of labor in light of the many supports to the economy provided by the government. One candid islander suggested that a factory be constructed in Inis Beag which would employ all of the men two to four hours each morning—"Then people would have a steady income and a lot of time off. Now it is hard to get up in the morning and decide what to do, and by noon you are just reaching a decision." An even franker man, of the oldest generation, was unwilling to agree with his peers about how hard they had worked when young. He was willing to acknowledge that now "times are easier," but that when he was a youth men often were idle and were chided by their elders and felt guilty. Interestingly, he was aware of the phenomenon of primitivism, which he described as "the romantic notions writers have about us."

Land Ownership

311 423 [134] [804] Inis Beag comprises a townland of four 256-acre quarters, called "carrows." Other land units are the half-quarter, the "cartron" of 64 acres, the half-cartron, the fourth or "croggery" of 16 acres, the half-croggery, the acre, and the three-quarter, half-, and quarter-acre. I have mentioned already that the total acreage of the island is 1440, the strand and common land together make up 200 acres, and the initial division of land among the local inhabitants probably was accomplished by a landlord late in the seventeenth century. Approximately 1000 acres are owned by the Irish Land Commission today and rented to 57 landholders, while two other properties have been purchased from the commission and thus are owned privately. The acreage not accounted for represents shore areas which are useless for agricultural and grazing purposes. Rent is charged according to the fourth and is 5 shillings[1] per year at the present time.

[657] [427] [436]

The quarters of Inis Beag extend southward in roughly parallel fashion from the four villages, and each landholder possesses numerous fields, ranging in

[1] A shilling is the equivalent of 14 cents and a pound $2.80 in United States currency.

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829
666 (the lower House of Parliament) every five. Candidates for the Dail occasionally visit Inis Beag to campaign briefly, but candidates for the county council seldom do because of the lack of interest shown in local elections and the small number of voters. In the last local election, approximately 60 of 194 eligible voters cast ballots, while the previous national election attracted slightly less than 100 voters. Two clerks from the island supervise the voting, which takes place in the school between nine o'clock in the morning and nine at night, five days before the rest of the nation votes. No more than a handful of the people are politically aware
• [521] and committed enough to campaign actively among their fellows. Political discussions animate the island a week or two before an election, but most of the people are poorly informed about the records and platforms of candidates and
[665] parties. Estimates vary as to the strength of the parties in Inis Beag; Fianna Fail receives anywhere from 50 to 90 percent of the votes cast, according to various respondents, whereas Fine Gael receives most of the rest with Labour a very weak
[177] third. The tendency among the folk is to vote party rather than politician, although the fortunes of Fianna Fail have depended largely on the popularity of aging President Eamon de Valera; "Dev" is regarded as "cute," not to be trusted, and vacillatory, but his fame outside of Ireland, which reflects to the credit of the nation, is the all important criterion of judgment among the local electorate. Some islanders have urged voters to interest themselves more in the local than national elections, arguing that many services and subsidies are provided by the county council, and its elected representatives can be "supervised" more closely than their Dail counterparts.

65 The local and national governments impinge on the lives of the folk most importantly through the many services and subsidies which are provided by agencies of the two bodies and implemented by visiting or locally appointed or hired functionaries. I have made reference already to certain government commitments: the language program and knitting industry, both underwritten by Gaeltacht Eireann, several of the agricultural measures supervised by Department of Agriculture representatives, the life saving company maintained by the Coast Life Saving Service, maintenance tasks performed by island men hired by the Irish
[624] Lights Service, and the post office and national school. Mention also should be made of the doctor stationed in a neighboring island, the local agent of the Irish Transport System who oversees the unloading and loading of cargo shipped on the steamer, and the islander who serves in three capacities as county council agent, supervisor of road improvements under the Special Employment Schemes Office, and bailiff. As bailiff, he signs official forms for the folk, can take an offender into custody and set bail, and must sign a warrant before the police can make an arrest in Inis Beag.

625 There are no police, called *gardai* and "guards," in the island, but three, including a sergeant, are posted in a nearby island and visit Inis Beag at least
674 once a month. Crime is virtually unknown among the folk, the few cases on record
[683] being for assault and battery and destruction of property; most cases are civil ones,
[684] involving property ownership and inheritance, and are tried intermittently by a
829 visiting magistrate. The guards are subjected to frequent criticism and derision,
625 especially when they come to the island dressed in plain-clothes to search for
[673]

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> conditions appraised. . . The community regulates its internal affairs through the *cuaird* as well. It is here public opinion is formulated. There is nothing formal about the decisions made upon the incidents arising from day to day. The local community has no implement with which to enforce its will. But it has the power of gossip and . . . boycott (Arensberg and Kimball 1940:190–191)

Decisions of this sort and their sanctions in Inis Beag rest largely in the hands of government officials and the priest, headmaster, and king.

Many folk long have believed that the island needs a council with representatives from each of the four villages serving on it, to foster cooperation and to formulate policies which bear on the welfare of all. After independence in 1922, a move was made to form such a council, but the civil war interrupted the process; since that time, according to the islanders, the opposition of curates and king, none of whom have wanted their vested interests threatened, has succeeded in blocking the formation of such a body. Other forces at work, however, are the lassitude and ambivalence toward authority of the people, and their dislike and jealousy of one another. They complain of the lack of leadership, or of the "wrong" kind of leadership, as in the case of the priest and king; but they are unable or unwilling to expend the energy needed to get themselves organized and "pull together" for the common good. Often those who advocate the formation of a council will, in the next breath, express their dislike or distrust of its potential members, or a desire to remain independent of its collective will should it run contrary to their own. A vacationing emigrant who said, "We have no sense of civic pride and responsibility but think only of ourselves.", assessed the situation accurately.

Among the traits attributed to Inis Beag folk by nativists and primitivists are self-reliance, independence, and individualism. But the self-reliance of the islanders has become undermined increasingly since 1891 by a benevolent government; their independence is severely curtailed by restrictions imposed on them by curate, headmaster, king, and their fellows; and their individualism is a figment of literary imagination disguising a strict conformism. Inis Beag as much as any community is characterized by gossip, ridicule, and opprobrium, which gain their effectiveness as social control mechanisms from the deep concern of the folk with "saving face," and which serve to limit freedom of action and behavioral idiosyncracy. When asked to rank the major deficiencies of island life, the people almost without exception place the prevalence of malicious gossiping, along with poverty and the intrusion of the clergy into secular affairs, at the head of their list.

No matter how much the islanders detest gossiping when they are its victims, they nevertheless welcome every opportunity to engage in it. News of an event passes quickly by word of mouth from Low to Terrace Villages, and variations in the description of the event are usually numerous due to the distortions of rumor. In order to circumvent gossip, parties are organized at the last moment and invitations issued by small boys moving quietly from door to door in the night; persons will leave the island—sometimes to emigrate, visit the hospital with a serious illness, or enter an order—without previous announcement, running from their homes to the strand to board the last canoes for the steamer; and mail is posted just prior to the arrival of the steamer and picked up immediately after it

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521 203 591 is carried to the post office, for fear that the postmaster will open letters and talk publicly of their contents (or take money from them). It is customary for boys and young men to hide themselves in the darkness or behind fences in order to overhear conversations of passersby, or witness their misbehavior, which can be reported; this compels folk who move about after dark to conceal their faces and talk in whispers or low tones. When a person hidden in the darkness is accosted suddenly, he will vault a fence, run away, or crouch down and hide his face or draw a [574] [612] raincoat over his head and shoulders to avoid being recognized. Most social events and visiting take place after sundown, so that movements from one house to another will be unobserved.

626 Deviant behavior once learned of assures its perpetrators of becoming the focus of gossip and ridicule. But ridicule seldom is voiced in the presence of the victim; rather, he or she is told of it by relatives and acquaintances who have [538] [539] witnessed or, more commonly, been told of it by others. My ballad not only took advantage of the ubiquity of rumor, but its composition, aided and abetted by two dozen respondents, enabled me to discover the existence of a seldom revealed tradition of satirical balladry, common to the Irish, which has singled out for opprobrium many folk in the past. During three summer visits to Inis Beag following 1960, my wife and I were able to witness the singing of my song publicly. We learned that it, as others of its genre, is sung only before small gatherings, and whether or not it (or certain of its verses) is sung and by whom depends on [123] the makeup of the assembled group. Since ridicule is almost never expressed in the presence of its victim or his kin or close friends, we were able to gain information about kinship relations and factionalism by noting the juxtaposition of balladiers and audiences and which verses were sung.

Courtship and Marriage

582 589 162 Marriages are fewer and are entered into later in Ireland than in any other Western country. In 1951, approximately one-third of the men and one-quarter of the women in Ireland between the ages of 55 and 64 years had never married, while two-thirds of the men and two-fifths of the women between 25 and 34 years of age were single. Celibacy and age of marriage figures for Inis Beag approximate those for the rest of peasant Ireland. In a population of 350 persons, 116 are married; 13 are widows; 3 are widowers; and 33 males over 23 years of age and 21 females over 17 are single. Since marriage occurs between the ages of 24 and 45 years for men and 18 and 32 for women, based on statistics extending back to 1911, only 18 men and 9 women (excluding 3 women who, because of physical disabilities, probably never will marry) are eligible for marriage. Not only are 34.4 percent of the males bachelors and 22.6 percent of the females spinsters, but the average marriage age for men in the period 1951 to 1960 was 35.5 years and for women 24.8 (compared to an average for rural Ireland of 34.7 582 years for men and 28.7 for women in 1946). The age span between spouses married during the past half-century ranges from the husband being 21 years older than his wife to 4 years younger, but the average age span has been between 8 and 12 years for each of the five decades. The number of marriages per decade has been

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able degree, has been dominated by parents who have allowed him to take on few major responsibilities, has a mother who acts as a wife surrogate in all but the sexual sphere (at least consciously), has established a routinized existence, and has male companions for whom he feels affection and with whom he shares numerous work and recreational activities. Some men who have been promised or willed land, and who have consenting parents and brides-to-be, will balk at a match because they are "too happy with the lads," and, if persuaded to marry, they will attempt to retain as much of their bachelor role as possible within marriage—"The men run with the boys before marriage and carry on the same afterward." Several bachelors and spinsters almost have married several times in succession, only to find the sexual commitment on each occasion too difficult to make at the last moment.

Before the coming of a permanent priest to Inis Beag, it is asserted that young people contemplating marriage were able to "keep company" frequently and openly before the union was arranged, and that some pairings were "love matches." But since then—with the separation of the sexes from late infancy on, the ubiquity of gossip and opprobrium, and the actions of priests—courting almost has disappeared, and it is not uncommon for a couple awaiting their wedding to have little personal knowledge of one another. Contact on the island between the sexes today is limited to meetings at the few parties which take place, at the occasional summer dances, or *céili*, held on a large flagging near the school, and sometimes "at the well" or "walking to the cow" during daylight hours. Two generations ago, private Sunday afternoon strolls afforded young men and women the opportunity of coming to know one another well, but these "rambles" about the island are done now only by couples of the same sex—one of the several manifestations of institutionalized friendship. Choice once again seems to be intruding into matchmaking, however, with the increasing demands of acculturated youths for marriage with "love."

Matches are the end product either of secret bargaining between the families involved which can extend for weeks, or of the impetuous act of a man who—goaded by companions or by stout, or both—will visit the home of his "chosen" after dark to negotiate, accompanied by a kinsman or close friend. The bargain, once made, is sealed by the male participants with the emptying of a bottle of whiskey brought by the prospective groom, after which a boy or young man of the household is sent out—often after midnight—to summon relatives and acquaintances for a night long party, known as the *cleamhnas* (the word for matchmaking in Gaelic). Sometimes this party is followed by as many as three more on consecutive nights, the expense for which is borne by the family of the bride-to-be. When the bargaining is protracted, it usually is done during the 12 days of Christmas or the final fortnight of Lent, and the match is announced soon after Epiphany or Easter. Hearsay concerning possible matches abounds at these times, but each year "most rumors are dry," unless, of course, "with a lot of drinking and urging a man might decide to take the plunge." It was customary in the past for the wedding to take place four days after the *cleamhnas*, but now the service must wait from one to three weeks until the genealogies of the families of the bride and groom are examined by the parish priest to determine their degree of consanguinity.

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121 518 609 between the separate groups of kin in the village are seen to be in delicate balance of power which is expressed in the local phrase, "you can't fight anybody around here because all their people will gang up on you." If an individual's kinsmen must defend him in his personal disputes, it necessarily follows that a clash between two individuals soon becomes a clash between two groups of kin.

114 121 518 By and large, these three conscious models apply to Inis Beag as well as Aughnaboy.

Leyton discovers broad "disparities between the conscious models and the statistical patterns formed by the actual behaviour" of people in Aughnaboy, manifested in 74 disputes covering a time span of ten years in the memories of his respondents. He classifies these disputes according to three criteria: their severity, the issues provoking them, and the categories of individuals involved (Leyton 1966:537–539). The criterion of severity yields three types of disputes: argument —"characterized by frequent or continuous arguments . . . associated primarily with exchange of verbal abuse;" withdrawal—where "social relations are actually severed and cooperation is withdrawn;" and interference—in which active attempts are made to "interfere with the welfare of the opposing party. These attempts, which may be secret or open, include legal suits, reports to the police, theft and, rarely, physical violence, as well as withdrawal of all cooperation." Three types of disputes also are distinguishable when issues provoking hostility are examined: economic—"which includes conflict such as rivalry between shopkeepers and disputed inheritance;" personality clashes—"which includes disputes primarily attributed to the innately quarrelsome personalities of certain individuals;" and jealousy—"which refers primarily to situations in which an individual's affections are alienated." The categories of persons involved in disputes are agnatic kin, uterine kin, affinal kin, and non-kin. Leyton establishes rank orders for each of his type classifications, and finds that the rank order for the severity classification is withdrawal, interference, and argument; for the issues classification, it is personality clashes, jealousy, and economic; and for the individuals involved classification, it is affinal kin, agnatic kin, non-kin, and uterine kin.

121 518 [521] [483] [57] 518 521 121 In applying Leyton's unconscious models of disputes to Inis Beag, I have modified slightly his severity and issues classifications. To the former, I have added a fourth type which I call gossip; this is not gossip of the ordinary variety so common on the island, but rather continuous, pernicious verbal attacks made by a person within earshot of his victim's relatives and close friends, which usually do not lead to argument. In the case of the issues classification, I have broadened the range of personality clashes. There are several "innately quarrelsome" individuals in Inis Beag, but most personality conflicts involve persons other than these, who have come to dislike one another intensely for numerous reasons, most of which are related to envy, jealousy (other than alienation of affections), resentment against authority, and hostility toward members of the opposite sex. Over 200 disputes have occurred on the island within the past generation, excluding those involving semi-permanent dwellers—curates, lighthouse keepers, and the Dane. The higher incidence of disputes in Inis Beag is attributable, for the most part, to the longer time span appraised and the addition of gossip to the severity classification in my analysis. However, the rank orders of the three type classifications

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796 627 782 year during the early morning. The folk visit the church and graveyard throughout the day and are awarded indulgences for their prayers in behalf of souls of the dead residing in Purgatory. In the cemetery, prayers are offered for relatives, one at a time, and then for everyone buried there, those lost at sea, and those who have no one to pray for them. An islander going to the chapel makes a succession of visits inside to pray, retiring to the churchyard after each prayer; an indulgence is granted for every visit, and some children carry small stones and pile them outside of the chapel to keep count of the indulgences thus acquired. It is said of those who remain longest in the cemetery and make the most number of visits to the chapel that they are attempting to mollify the ghosts of relatives whom they treated badly when alive.

796 The 12 days of Christmas commence with the feast of the Nativity on December 25th and end with the feast of the Epiphany on January 6th, and include the feasts of St. Stephen on December 26th, Holy Innocents on December 28th, and Circumcision on January 1st. This is the high point of the year for the folk, even though it is a much quieter period today than it was half a century ago, when social concerns outweighed religious ones. Work is suspended altogether on Christmas and the three days following it and on January 1st and 6th, and during [167] [582] [574] the rest of the period only "light chores" are done. Importance is attached to the 12 days over and above their religious significance and the fact that little work is done; for at this time emigrants return to Inis Beag on holiday; if a marriage is to occur during the year it is likely to be arranged then; at least one party usually is given which attracts most of the adults; and the men gather in the pubs on • [621] several nights to sing, dance, and tell stories. For weeks before Christmas, rumors abound as to which relatives will visit the island, who will marry whom, and where the party will take place; these serve to sharpen the anticipation of the islanders and to make them less mindful of the worsening of the weather.

[292] In preparation for the Christmas season, new clothes are fashioned—as at Easter—to be worn initially on the five feast days, and it is usual for a man needing [351] a new *crios* to have it woven in time for Christmas mass. Houses and streets are [356] cleaned and repaired, fireplaces whitewashed, and supplies are taken in for [262] the 12 days as steamer service is curtailed. On Christmas Eve, a special dish of [364] corned ling or cod smothered in sauce is served at "Christmas supper," and large white candles purchased in the shops are placed on the dining table and in one or more windows of the cottage, to be burned nightly during the 12 days. The sight from the sea of the darkened island with its hundreds of candles rivals in beauty the view of the mainland coast far away on St. John's Eve, when bonfires are [574] lighted as far as the eye can see. Relatives visit one another after Christmas supper, [431] and when the children have been put to bed, stockings are hung above the fireplace and filled by the parents with oranges, candies, ribbons, pencils, handkerchiefs, [861] and toys for the infants. Santa Claus is the gift giver, so infants are taught, and thus he can be used to promote good behavior on their part in the weeks prior to Christmas; this belief seldom persists into childhood, however, as older children [431] are eager to disabuse their younger siblings of it. Adults usually do not exchange gifts, but they receive them from kin and acquaintances abroad to whom they in [262] turn send Christmas cards. On Christmas Day, special cakes and breads are served

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parties, so that many islanders will not give them for fear of possible damage to houses and outbuildings. The reason why one man is assigned to the barrel of stout and a "firm" master of ceremonies is favored is to curb drunkenness and factional fighting. Small parties are coming to replace the large ones of the past, with invitations tendered secretly and at the last moment to avoid attracting "hooligans." The format, however, has remained the same.

Pubs

Both pubs in Inis Beag do a thriving business. There are some folk who purchase all of their provisions, drinks, and tobacco in only one of the pubs, others who buy most of them in one but occasionally do business in the second, and still others who scrupulously balance their buying between the two. The first group is composed of near kin of the publicans, and the second of those who are economically beholden to the king and utilize his pub mostly, or who dislike him and give the lion's share of their business to the other. This pattern is broken only when one of the pubs is out of a commodity which the other has in stock, one of them is closed for whatever reason, a "big night" is taking place at one of them, or a dispute interferes. During the day, provisions are purchased in the shop—by children, women, and sometimes men; the women and children make their visits as brief as possible, but the men are likely to stay for at least one "pint" of stout and a "smoke." Other visitors in the daytime are chronic drinkers, men who are working nearby and use the pub for a break, and men reciprocating for economic services rendered. The pub is the province of the adult males at night, and the only women who enter are the teachers, visiting emigrants, and tourists. Seldom is step dancing done unless outsiders are present, and when women are in the audience they will be called out to form a set or to dance solo or be paired with an islander. Some nights only two or three of the folk will put in an appearance at the pub, but on other nights as many as 20 persons will crowd into the narrow room, while others in the hallway and outside wait to take their turn inside. Another half-dozen men may sit in the snug drinking and talking together privately.

Men come to the pub after dark usually in groups of two, three, or four. Reciprocity dictates the drinking procedure, with each man in a group taking his turn at "standing a round" for as long as the evening lasts. Men who do not like to drink much or have little money will come to the pub singly or with another in like circumstances, so that they will not become victims of the custom of reciprocation. My first experience with this custom—in 1958 in a neighboring island—almost ended in tragedy for me, as I was with six men who insisted on drinking "glasses" of whiskey; only my deep commitment to research and a heavy meal a short time before prevented a "third round knockout." The first hour after the men arrive in the pub is a quiet one, as they sit in silence or whisper to one another while drinking pints in rapid succession. As their shyness gradually is overcome by alcohol, they become more talkative and speak in louder tones to a wider circle of their fellows. At least two hours must pass before individuals have "courage" enough to tell stories to all assembled or to sing. The best singers will be

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tent; they have depended on a limited sample of respondents; and most of their queries have been guided by Sean O Suilleabhain's *A Handbook of Irish Folklore*, which does not contain numerous categories of significance to anthropologists.

My wife and I devoted most of our research to documenting the contemporary culture of Inis Beag: its economic, political, social, religious, esthetic, and recreational aspects. We also described formal and informal education and the personality traits formed by it, reconstructed Inis Beag history of the past century by examining historical materials of many types and probing the memories of aged island respondents, and recorded cultural change in process over an eight-year period. The standard ethnographic research techniques that we employed include guided and open-ended interviews, external and participant observation, collection of life histories, cross-checking, photography, and phonography. The sample for much of our data was the total universe of 350 inhabitants.

It is extremely difficult to obtain information in Inis Beag about such matters as amounts and sources of income, disputes, pagan religious retentions and reinterpretations, and sex. This brief list might be increased by at least threefold and gives rise to a consideration of the problems associated with obtaining reliable data from the Irish in general and the islanders in particular. Honor Tracy, in the first chapter (aptly entitled "Forebodings") of her book, *Mind You I've Said Nothing*, humorously presents one of the shortest, yet most discerning analyses of Irish national character yet written by a novelist and predicts the various reactions that her volume will evoke in Irish readers.[4] She concludes with the following remarks about the difficulties surrounding fact finding in Ireland:

> This question of fact was another of the spectres hovering in my path. In every book there should be a fact here and there or the writer is charged with aimless frivolity. But facts in Ireland are very peculiar things. They are rarely allowed to spoil the sweep and flow of conversation: the crabbing

[4] These reactions appear to be institutionalized, as my writings and conversational remarks have also evoked them. Two additional responses that I have encountered are: my conclusions are invalidated because I failed to consult certain "source materials" written in Gaelic, and my inferior writing style precludes serious consideration of my findings. I take pains to explain, usually in vain, the many methods of fieldwork utilized by ethnographers to Irish persons who are critical of my data and who invariably use the phrase, "You can't trust what an Irishman tells you." On a rare occasion, one listener to my lengthy explanation said, "Ah, you're cuter than we are"—a compliment indeed!